


# The Dust That Falls from Dreams: A Novel (Vintage International)

*By Louis de Bernieres*

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**The Dust That Falls from Dreams: A Novel (Vintage International)** By Louis de Bernieres

From the acclaimed author of *Corelli's Mandolin*, here is a sumptuous, sweeping, powerfully moving new novel about a British family whose lives and loves are indelibly shaped by the horrors of World War I and the hopes for its aftermath.

In the brief golden years of the Edwardian era the McCosh sisters—Christabel, Ottilie, Rosie and Sophie—grow up in an idyllic household in the countryside south of London. On one side, their neighbors are the proper Pendennis family, recently arrived from Baltimore, whose close-in-age boys—Sidney, Albert and Ashbridge—shake their father's hand at breakfast and address him as "sir." On the other side is the Pitt family: a "resolutely French" mother, a former navy captain father, and two brothers, Archie and Daniel, who are clearly "going to grow up into a pair of daredevils and adventurers." In childhood this band is inseparable, but the days of careless camaraderie are brought to an abrupt halt by the outbreak of The Great War, in which everyone will play a part.

All three Pendennis brothers fight in the hellish trenches at the front; Daniel Pitt becomes an ace fighter pilot with his daredevil tendencies intact; Rosie and Ottilie McCosh volunteer in the hospitals, where women serve with as much passion and nearly as much hardship as the men at the front; Christabel McCosh becomes one of the squad of photographers sending "snaps" of their loved ones at home to the soldiers; and Sophie McCosh drives for the RAF in France. In the aftermath of the war, as "the universal joy and relief were beginning to be tempered by . . . an atmosphere of uncertainty," everyone must contend with the modern world that is slowly emerging from the ashes of the old.

A wholly immersive novel about a particular time and place, *The Dust That Falls from Dreams* also illuminates the timeless ways in which men and women carry profound loss alongside indelible hope.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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## Editorial Review

Review
“A fresh extension of de Berniéres longstanding interest in the timeless conflicts of love and loyalty . . . moving . . . poignant.” —Randy Boyagoda, *The New York Times Book Review*

“De Bernières is an astute observer of the human heart, and his account of an idealistic young woman learning to live in the real world is beautifully observed.” —*Mail on Sunday*

“[A] charming and quietly moving tale.” —*Sunday Telegraph*

“A richly rewarding read.” —*Daily Express*

“Rhapsodic, wistful and with more than a touch of whimsy . . . It’s pure escapism of the very highest quality.” —Charlotte Heathcote, *Sunday Express*

“It’s a book in which readers will happily immerse themselves, and one which will surely and deservedly be a bestseller.” —Allan Massie, *The Scotsman*

“Another epic novel of love and loss.” —*Woman and Home*

“A moving and engrossing read.” —*My Weekly* magazine

“[*The Dust that Falls from Dreams*] will no doubt be a hit with millions of fans worldwide. . . . As with superlative First World War literature from Pat Barker’s *Regeneration* trilogy through Sebastian Faulks’s *Birdsong* to Louisa Young’s *My Dear, I Wanted to Tell You*, the horrors are vividly evoked. De Berniéres is adept at describing how lives can be devastated in minutes . . . Powerful . . . delightful . . . Plenty of Dickensian social observation.” —Leyla Sanai, *The Independent* (London)

“War and romance with an epic sweep is what people expect of Louis de Berniéres. . . . And it is to war and romance that he returns in *The Dust that Falls from Dreams*. . . . Thrillingly evoked . . . The inner life of de Berniéres’ lively roll call of characters is as vivid as the external realities, as he explores how anyone might recover from the death of someone they had loved since childhood, and how those who witness such deaths might struggle to readjust to civilian life.” —Louise Jury, *The Independent* (London)

“Evocative.” —Deborah Dundas, *The Star* (Toronto)

“A very complex and moving evocation of the war.” —Alex Clark, *The Guardian* (London)

“Genuinely thrilling.” —Sue Gaisford, *Financial Times*

“Considerable emotional power . . . deserves a large following.” —Mark Lawson, *The Guardian* (London)

“A sweeping historical epic of love and war, one that matches *Birds Without Wings* and his career-high bestseller *Corelli’s Mandolin* for sheer breadth, storytelling and emotional intensity. . . . Top-heavy with heartwarming and devastating character-led drama.” —Malcolm Forbes, *The National* (UAE)

"*The Dust that Falls from Dreams* is modeled on John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*. . . . A feast of a novel . . . This book is very much a hit." —John Sutherland, *The Times* (London)

"De Berniéres . . . spins a masterful tale that bridges two worlds and delineates the apocalyptic abyss in between. . . . This heartrending saga of love, loss, and endurance paints a vivid portrait of the steep price paid by an entire generation of young men and women who participated in and endured the Great War." —Margaret Flanagan, *Booklist*

About the Author
**Louis de Bernières** is the author of, among other novels, *A Partisan's Daughter, Birds Without Wings, Corelli's Mandolin, The Troublesome Offspring of Cardinal Guzman, Señor Vivo and the Coca Lord* and *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts*. Selected by *Granta* as one of the twenty Best of Young British Novelists in 1993, de Bernières lives in London.

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***1. The Coronation Party***

This was the day that Daniel vaulted the wall.

Not many weeks previously the tiny Queen had begun to lose her appetite. In Marseilles, President Kruger of South Africa, fleeing into exile laden with wealth stolen from his own people, raised the rabble to new frenzies of anti-Britishness, and hotels where British travellers were thought to be staying were besieged.

The Queen grew drowsy. She had never before shown any lapse of energy or attention, but now she nodded off even at crucial moments. She received a letter from a boy bugler in the Devons, telling her how he had been the one to sound the charge at Waggon Hill, and she managed to reply to it.

The Queen travelled from London to Osborne House, on the Isle of Wight. She loved it there, and had long considered it to be her real family home. She had her own little beach with a bathing hut, and there was a miniature house where her children, now scattered across Europe, used to play when Albert was still alive. Across the Solent she could visit the vast military hospital that she had set up at Netley, bringing the scarves that she liked to knit for the wounded soldiers.

The Queen found that she could not speak when the Brazilian ambassador came to present his credentials. She was forgetting how to talk. She failed to recognise Lord Roberts when he returned in triumph from South Africa in order to become the new Commander-in-Chief. He was bewildered and grief-stricken.

The Queen performed her last great imperial act, and proclaimed the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia. Her visit to the Riviera was cancelled, and the Keeper of the Privy Purse was obliged to pay out £800 in compensation to the Hotel Cimiez.

It had been so long since the death of a sovereign that no one knew what to say, or how to behave. Lord Salisbury refused to talk about the accession ceremonies because it was too upsetting. The well-to-do cancelled their dinner parties and balls, and the frivolous optimism that had accompanied the arrival of a new century evaporated. It was January, and the dark clouds that wept rain onto the land complemented the mood of the people beneath them.

The Queen's relatives and descendants converged on Osborne from all over Europe. In South Africa the war that was supposed to have been won already was carried on by Botha, Smuts and de Wet. Money and young

men continued to be expended. The British troops were killed mainly by enteric fever.

The tiny Queen died. The Lord Mayor of London was informed, and then the rest of the world. Whilst the nation lay stunned, the Great argued about what should be done next. Lord Acton announced that King Edward VII could not call himself Edward VII because he was not descended from previous Edwards. Did the Lord Mayor of London count as an ex-officio member of the Privy Council? He decided that he did, and gatecrashed it. Who was in charge of the funeral? Was it the Lord Chamberlain or the Duke of Norfolk, even though he was a Catholic? The Duke insisted on his historic right, and the King conceded. Lady Cadogan received an invitation to the interment that was intended for her husband, in which she was requested to come wearing trousers.

The Queen's coffin was so minute that it might have been that of a child. King Edward and the Kaiser walked behind it as it was drawn through Cowes. It came across the Solent in a battle-ship, flanked by the greatest fleet in the world. In London the route from Victoria Station to Buckingham Palace then Paddington Station was blocked solid with mourners hoping to see the great procession of the gun carriage. Behind it rode King Edward, flanked by the Duke of Connaught and Kaiser Wilhelm, followed by the handsome and slim Crown Prince of Germany, the embodiment of hope for his nation, the guarantor of its great future as a beacon of civilisation.

The Queen's body was laid to rest at Windsor. The grandmother of Europe had gone, and everyone knew as if by instinct that a momentous era had suddenly ended. She left behind railways that ran at sixty miles an hour, with carriages that nowadays had roofs on them. Vast liners crossed the Atlantic in two weeks. Bull-baiting had gone, and there was a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals and another for the prevention of cruelty to children. Swearing had become taboo in polite society, and aristocratic men no longer got so drunk at dinner parties that ladies had to make their escape through the windows. There were now aerated bread shops, and Lyons Corner Houses where one was served by 'Nippies' in white frilly aprons. Anybody these days could buy coffee. The River Fleet was no longer an open sewer. Many had electric light, and there was clean water laid on in the working-class districts for half an hour every day, except for Sundays, causing an awful elbowing on Saturdays. Motor cars no longer caught fire when you started them up. They had, however, spoiled the evening drive in hansoms through Hyde Park. The cult of respect-ability had introduced a blessed order into people's lives, and at the same time opened the door for marvellous hypocrisy.

Much as the people had loved their tiny Queen, there had been something dull about all that respectability, and the grief and stupefaction that had engulfed her subjects was tempered by the anticipation of something that might be more entertaining. The new King was a bon viveur. He loved France rather than Germany. He consorted with actresses. For the last ten years, in any case, the Victorian age had already been slipping away. Fast girls smoked, and wore the most shocking bloomers when they went out on their bicycles. Businesswomen of dubious morality were getting jobs in the City. Saddlers who specialised in side-saddles found their orders drying up. Crowds filled the music halls to hear smutty songs rendered by cheeky chappies and saucy doxies.

The new King, kept strictly in the dark about state matters during his mother's reign, grew impatient with precedent and forged a new path. He upset everyone at court. He gave the right to organise his coronation to the Catholic Duke of Norfolk and not to the Anglican Lord Chamberlain. There was a long and bitter dispute about whether the Lords should be robed, and the decision was changed four times. He sent Lord Carrington, a notorious liberal, as his personal envoy to France, Spain and Portugal. This was the same Lord Carrington who had once, as one of a panel of magistrates that had tried him, scandalously paid the fine of a newly released convict, caught sleeping rough when he had not been able to walk to High Wycombe before

darkness fell. The alternative had been several more months in prison, and Carrington had resigned from the bench immediately afterwards, saying that if this was justice he wanted nothing more to do with it.

The King dragged Lord Wolsey from retirement, and sent him abroad, with sashes and medals to present to foreign potentates, even the Shah of Iran, who thereby became the first Muslim to become a member of the Christian Order of the Garter. He cleared out his mother's immense accumulation of bric-a-brac, updated his plumbing, filled his court with men who were interesting rather than important, and with women who were both interesting and beautiful.

In Court Road, Eltham, on 9 August 1902, Mr and Mrs Hamilton McCosh held a coronation party, postponed from June. It was to be a kind of elaborate high tea. They borrowed long trestles from several firms of wallpaperers, covered them with beautiful damask cloths, and, at greatly inflated prices, hired enough plain china plates and silver-plated cutlery to see them through the day. The servants set up two long tables in the garden, to accommodate the buffet, and laid out rugs all over the lawn and in the orchard in order to create a grand *déjeuner sur l'herbe*. Chairs were brought out of the house for the elderly or stiff of limb. From the kitchen there appeared plates of ham and tongue, elaborate salads in the French style, Normandy cheeses, and fabulous heaps of fresh Kentish strawberries and Devon cream. For the children there was lemonade, and for the adults jugs of potent fruit cup with sprigs of mint floating on the surface. Chilled champagne would be brought out in time for a toast to the King after Mr McCosh had made his speech.

This was the beginning of the age when riches would finally come to count as much as rank. Court Road consisted of very large detached houses with substantial gardens at the rear. Most had two gateways connected by a small semicircular driveway out in the front so that carriages could arrive and leave without any awkward manoeuvring. The McCosh entrance and exit had impressive brick pillars with the grampians set into them in Portland stone. Between them ran a low wall, just the right height for children to walk along. Mr McCosh had planted a small walnut tree just behind it, because he loved the way the leaves turned yellow in autumn, and was convinced that walnut was the hard-wood of the future, without thought to the possibility that long after his death the tree's roots would topple the pillars and wall altogether, so that by the end of the century there would be no memory of the house ever having had a name at all.

Inside were large rooms with high ceilings and small coal fires. On the top floor were crudely furnished rooms with washstands for the servants, but on the floor below that there was a proper bathroom with a real lion-footed cast-iron bath that gave hot water from a boiler house attached to the side of the kitchen. In this boiler house was often to be found the boilerman, dozing in the warmth, or rolling cigarettes, and occasionally getting up to shovel in a new dose of coal. His was a life of bucolic idleness, disrupted only by the occasional breakdown of the whole system, which worked on the thermosyphon principle, without any need of a pump at all.

In general one could gauge the success of the householders of Court Road by the elaborateness of their cornices. Mr McCosh was an intelligent, charming, humane, ambitious, hard-working man with an eye to anything whatsoever that might turn a profit, and The Grampians had by far the most elaborate, extensive and delicate cornices of any house in Court Road. His chief weakness, which he was able to turn to profit even so, was an addiction to golf. He was often to be found playing rounds at the Blackheath when he was supposed to be in his London office.

One disadvantage of his speculations was that he might veer from fabulous riches to abject penury in the blink of an eye. He was accustomed to avoiding paying bills until such time as he recouped his wealth. This he always did, but it remained a sore point to the local tradesmen, who never knew when it was wise to accept his custom or decline it. Their one consolation was that he scrupulously calculated the interest on any

debt he owed, and paid it in full.

On 9 August 1902 Mr Hamilton McCosh had plenty of money, it seemed unlikely that it was going to rain, and he was rejoicing in the pleasure of his own largesse.

By his side, frequently departing from it in order to direct the servants, stood his wife. Mrs McCosh had been a great beauty in her youth, and was to retain her comeliness into old age. She was seven years senior to her husband, and had married late owing to a long previous engagement to a milord who subsequently turned out to have had a wife already, locked up in an asylum in New York. It had taken her many years to recover from the mortification of the scandal having become public and being written up in the press, and she had virtually gone into seclusion until the gallant and impervious Hamilton McCosh had hauled her out of it. She had caused much gossip by playing tennis vigorously when pregnant, and was notorious for her outspoken belief that women should vote equally with men. She had become a warrior in what was being called ‘the Sex War’. However, her husband would explain that this was because she wanted the right to vote Conservative. She had recently taken up cycling and was still somewhat bruised about the thighs after losing a wheel during a tour of Hayling Island.

Mrs McCosh’s great weakness was for the royal family. She followed their doings avidly, and subscribed to *The Times* only to peruse the Court Circular. The coronation party was her idea, even though most of the nation had already feasted a month before, when the King had donated £30,000 to the poor of London, and 456,000 people had eaten and drunk at his expense. The King himself, recovering in bed from an operation, had sent his regrets to each Lord Mayor, and the Prince and Princess of Wales had made up for his absence by visiting twenty of the dinner parties in succession. It had all felt like a wonderful new start.

Mrs McCosh was looking forward to the coronation party, but also wondered if she could bear to see it through, because she was still in deep mourning for the Queen, and had only this very day given up wearing black. She was not at all sure that she approved of the new King, who kept racehorses and had dismissed many of the old Queen’s retainers.

‘I do hope that His Majesty is fully recovered,’ she said to her husband, somewhat insincerely.

‘What was it again?’ he asked.

‘Peritiphylitis.’

‘Sounds dreadful. What on earth is it?’

‘Darling, I’ve told you so many times. It’s an infection of something that the appendix hangs from. Anyway, they say he’s recovered, but won’t be carrying the Sword of State to the altar. I do hope he doesn’t collapse.’

‘Kings of Scotland dinna collapse,’ replied Mr McCosh. ‘They die heroically in battle or get stabbed in their sleep.’

‘My dear, I hope you are not suggesting that our dear present Queen Alexandra may be something of a Lady Macbeth? She is Danish after all.’

‘Danish monarchs kill their brothers and nephews, if we are to believe the Bard. And women are strange, unscrupulous creatures. And queens are women. And the Danish Queen married her husband’s brother, who killed him. A sorry lot, Danish queens.’

‘You must stop being provocative, my dear. It’s fortunate that I’m so used to your humour. If that is what one should call it. *Hamlet* is undoubtedly fiction, as you well know. I do wish one could have been there . . . at the coronation, I mean. I should have loved to see Lord Kitchener all done up in plumes, and Sir Alfred Gaselee. And the new Prime Minister, of course.’

‘Well, my dear, we are exceedingly lucky with the weather. We couldn’t have asked for a nicer day. And we have the Eltham aristocracy to entertain. Talking of which, have we set up the table for the tradesmen and artisans?’

‘Of course. They’ll be down there at the orchard end.’

‘Ah, far below the salt.’

Affecting not to understand his humour, which is how the British love to spoil a joke, Mrs McCosh replied, ‘Every table will have its own salt cellar and pepper pot. I’m just going to see that Nurse has got the children ready.’

‘Ah, here is Mme Pitt and her little boys,’ said Mr McCosh. ‘I shall go and greet them, and you can chivvy up the girls, my dear.’ For a reason long forgotten, there was a blue door in the wall that divided the garden of The Grampians from that of its neighbour on the left. The door was old and a little rotten at top and bottom. Its hinges were creaky and rusty, but it still worked, and it was kept unseized because of its frequent use by the children of the two families.

On the other side of the blue door dwelt the Pendennis family, recently arrived from Baltimore, complete with three young sons, Sidney, Albert and Ashbridge, all born a year apart, and each of the younger exactly six inches shorter than his immediate elder, so that they reminded some people of a set of library steps. Every morning these boys shook their father’s hand when they came down to breakfast, and addressed him as ‘sir’.

The McCosh family had four daughters, blue-eyed Rosie, with her long rich chestnut hair, and fair skin peppered with freckles; then Christabel, an English rose in the making, tall and athletic. Then there was Ottilie, who was clearly going to be of the traditional English pear shape, with a pale round face and lovely dark round eyes set beneath a sweet dark fringe. Lastly there was Sophie, little, thin and ungainly, with uncontrollable frizzy hair, whose humour and manner of speech were already becoming quirky. Her father liked to say that she had a lopsided view of the world, and that it would stand her in good stead. Whilst it would be true to say that these girls deeply loved their difficult mother, it would also be true to say that they adored their easy-going father.

On the opposing garden wall there was no blue door, so the two boys who played in the garden beyond it would arrive simply by climbing over and leaping down. They had worn a hard, flat patch in the rose bed. The wall was seven foot high, and it was already clear that Archie Pitt and his younger brother Daniel were going to grow up into a pair of daredevils and adventurers. On this day, just as everybody was settling down on their rugs and chairs with their plates of tongue and their cup, Archie, aged fourteen, appeared on the top of the wall in his best clothes, and stood on it, arms akimbo, with all the confidence of a Himalayan goat.

‘Archie, what on earth are you doing up there?’ demanded Mrs McCosh.

‘We have created a spectacle,’ announced the boy, ‘in honour of the King.’

‘In honour of the King?’ repeated Mrs McCosh, somewhat placated. ‘Well, that’s very fine of you, I’m sure.’

‘Can we put some of the cushions just down there, the other side of the path?’ asked Archie. He had a tone of command unusual in an adolescent, and those immediately below him vacated their rugs and arranged cushions as directed, their indulgent assumption being that Archie wanted a soft spot on which to land.

‘Really, one shouldn’t tolerate such things in a child,’ said Mrs McCosh.

‘Aren’t you intrigued?’ replied her husband. ‘I must say, I do admire such confidence in a boy, don’t you? And anyway, I know what’s going to happen, and I’ve already given the boys permis-sion. We are going to start off with a feat.’

Archie’s parents were as sanguine. They stood below, arm in arm, grinning proudly. Archie’s mother, resolutely French, but Protestant nonetheless, like a sort of belated Huguenot, was always known as Mme Pitt, on her own insistence, and was twirling a parasol with her free hand. Captain Pitt, formerly of the Royal Yacht Victoria and Albert, was dressed in naval uniform for the great day, the gold braid glittering in the sunlight against the dark blue. Mme Pitt said, ‘*Chou-chou*, I hope this is not going to end in tears.’

‘*Maman*, we’ve been practising like billy-o. Daniel’s done it heaps of times. And it was your idea.’

‘The worst that can happen is a broken neck,’ said the Captain.

‘*Oh, chéri, tais-toi*. You shouldn’t say such things. It tempts the Devil.’

‘Let’s hope to settle for a sprained ankle, then.’

‘*Chéri! Arrêtes!*’

‘Is everybody ready?’ called Archie. ‘Come on, everybody, look!’

Gradually, a hush fell, and even the servants ceased bustling. Mr McCosh stepped forward. ‘My friends and, indeed, one or two mortal enemies, welcome to The Grampians. We are here to celebrate the beginning of a new age, perhaps. His Majesty is . . . how shall I put it? . . . somewhat older than his dear mother was when she came to the throne . . . but by God’s grace he may yet have a long life and remain our monarch for many a good year to come. We have lived well, progressively more well with each passing year under the late Queen, who has given her name to what seems in retrospect an entire age; but now a new term has been coined, and we are already describing ourselves as Edwardians, are we not? When was the nation previously so happy? I would suggest it was at the Restoration. We had in King Charles the Second a merry monarch, and now we have another monarch at least as merry as he was. May he long remain so! And may we be merry too. Our hope, the hope of any race, is in its youth, is it not? We are to begin our celebrations today with a wonderful piece of audacity by our two young neighbours, Archie and Daniel Pitt. They have been practising for days! Pray silence and attention for Archie and Daniel Pitt!’

There was a small burst of applause, Archie atop the wall took a low bow, and his mother grasped the Captain’s arm more tightly in her own. ‘It’ll be wonderful,’ he reassured her proudly. ‘The boys are completely fearless.’

A silence ensued, and Archie bent his knees in readiness. He raised his left hand, and let it drop, and a few seconds later a small flying boy appeared beside and above him, clutching the top of a vaulting pole. The boy

released the pole as he soared above the wall, and at the same moment Archie ducked down and leapt up, circling his shins with his forearms. He somersaulted neatly down to the cushions, landing on his feet as his even more aerial brother landed beside him. Archie put his arm around his little brother’s neck and they bowed together, grinning broadly.

## Users Review

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**Helen Turner:**

Reading a publication tends to be new life style in this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world can easily share their idea. Publications can also inspire a lot of people. A great deal of author can inspire their particular reader with their story or even their experience. Not only the story that share in the guides. But also they write about the information about something that you need example. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your kids, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors on earth always try to improve their talent in writing, they also doing some study before they write on their book. One of them is this The Dust That Falls from Dreams: A Novel (Vintage International).

**Mollie Walker:**

The reserve with title The Dust That Falls from Dreams: A Novel (Vintage International) has lot of information that you can discover it. You can get a lot of help after read this book. This kind of book exist new know-how the information that exist in this publication represented the condition of the world right now. That is important to yo7u to know how the improvement of the world. This specific book will bring you within new era of the globalization. You can read the e-book on your smart phone, so you can read this anywhere you want.

**Michael Garcia:**

Precisely why? Because this The Dust That Falls from Dreams: A Novel (Vintage International) is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will surprise you with the secret this inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who write the book in such wonderful way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book have got such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking means. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I were you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

**William Rice:**

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